

# live fast, die young (the danger zone remix) by darlingargents

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**Summary:**

Kali is in Hawkins for one reason and one reason only: to help Jane get a handle on her powers. Everything else is such a distant second that it barely registers.

Well. Nearly everything.

## live fast, die young (the danger zone remix)

### Author's Note:

- For [ConvenientAlias](#).
- Inspired by [you like the danger \(but i can give you that\)](#) by [ConvenientAlias](#).

This has probably entirely too much homework talk for what it is, but.

First part of the title is from Bad Girls by M.I.A.

Kali is failing English.

It's not that she doesn't understand it. She knows what she wants to say, but somewhere in between her ideas and her pen on paper, the words dry up. Her teacher says that her spoken insights in class are "fascinating and original", but that didn't stop her from getting 49% on her essay and bringing her total grade down to a fail. If she doesn't bring it up before spring break, she'll probably need to retake the class over the summer, and she can't do that.

It's time for her math class, but Kali is pushing her way outside, to the spot behind the cafeteria where she usually goes to smoke at lunchtime. She sits on the ground, the snow melting a little under her legs and soaking into her pants, and lights a cigarette with hands that she wishes she could say are steady as a rock.

The nicotine calms her a little. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out the paper, stares at the fat red F scrawled across the top. She wants to light the essay on fire, but her teacher offered to let her rewrite it for credit using the comments, so she'd be lighting her slim possibility of passing the class on fire if she did that.

Kali sighs and scrunches the paper back up before shoving it into her pocket. Later. She'll deal with it later.

The thing is, she shouldn't have to be dealing with this. A normal teenager's life. High school. *Homework*. She's in Hawkins for one

reason and one reason only: to help Jane get a handle on her powers. Everything else is such a distant second that it barely registers.

Well. Nearly everything.

The door she came out of opens and Nancy steps out, a red scarf around her neck that's a spot of brightness against the dirty snow and grungy gray-white walls of the school. She unwinds it as she moves to sit beside Kali on the ground, and holds it in her lap as she crosses her legs.

"I noticed you weren't in math," she says by way of greeting.

"I already know it," Kali says, and a smile pulls at the corner of Nancy's mouth. It's been her confident assertion throughout the year so far, every time Nancy suggested studying or homework instead of more interesting things like sex or power experimentation or even just watching the static of a broken TV. Anything is more interesting than schoolwork, in Kali's opinion.

"Of course." Nancy twists her scarf around her hand, unwraps it again, and reaches for the cigarette in Kali's mouth. Kali lets her take it, watches her eyes flutter shut as the nicotine hits her system and smoke puffs out of her mouth. Nancy is gorgeous no matter what she's doing, in Kali's unbiased opinion, but there's something especially erotic about watching her smoke.

"Let's go somewhere," Kali says. The essay in her pocket is like a lead weight. She knows Nancy would help her if she asked, but she also knows she's not going to. She doesn't ask for help. Nancy has been upset about it often enough, but it doesn't mean she's gotten better at it.

Nancy glances at her watch, and grimaces. "I said I was in the bathroom."

"You've never skipped class in your life. No one will care." Kali leans in, whispering in Nancy's ear. "Come on. You're so good. Be *bad* for once."

Nancy's whole body tenses, and she lets out a pained laugh. "Fuck —

Kali . You need to stop *doing* that.”

“Mm.” If Nancy ever really asks, Kali will stop. But Nancy is trembling and her pupils are blown wide and her cheeks are reddening in the cold air. Kali knows she’s exactly where she wants to be. “Let’s go for a drive.”

Nancy nods and stands, brushing snow off her pants, and offers Kali a hand up. Kali takes it.

\*

The best part of training Jane, for Kali, is that she’s actually gotten much better at her own control. Enough that she can, for example, make illusions while she’s driving.

They drive for about an hour. Kali makes Nancy see them on a boat, surrounded by waves on a sunny day, before plunging into darkness and storm. A massive wave is about to overtake their boat, Nancy screams in half-delight, half-terror, and the wave explodes just above them and turns into rain. Thunder cracks in the distance, and they’re driving a winding road through a forest at night as the floodwaters fall from the sky. A werewolf howls somewhere far away, and the illusion shifts again.

By the time they pull up at the middle school at the end, to pick up Jane for her afternoon lesson, Nancy is grinning like a maniac. She looks more relaxed than she’s been for the last week or so, ever since school and extracurriculars got so busy for both of them that they couldn’t meet up. Kali knows Nancy needs this as much as she does. She needs to feel the rush of danger without real risk, the thrill that horror movies can’t provide when you’ve seen the real horrors in the world. And Kali needs to prove to herself that she can help people with what she does. She helps Jane, and she helps Nancy too.

Not to mention, it’s incredibly fun to think of new and exciting illusions as her standard tricks become boring. If she can get through this, she thinks she might become a filmmaker.

“You’d be a good movie star,” she says to Nancy. Nancy, in the middle of lighting another cigarette, glances at her and rolls her eyes.

"I've fought real monsters. I don't think I could pretend."

"I'll show you the monsters. You'll be the best actress there is."

Nancy grins around the smoke and leans in to kiss the corner of Kali's mouth. "You can stick to Hollywood. I've got enough drama in my life." She pauses, and the smile falls off her face. "Kali. Why weren't you in math?"

The bubble of happiness that Kali's been riding pops.

"Failed my English essay," she says. She probably would've fought harder about saying anything if her endorphin high wasn't still kicking around in her veins. As is, she's tired, and she doesn't want to imagine Nancy's disappointment if she deflects the question again.

"Oh, no." Nancy stubs out her cigarette in the ashtray and takes Kali's hand in both of hers. "Was it close?"

"Yeah." Kali closes her eyes and lets her head fall back against the headrest. "Teacher gave me lots of notes and said I could rewrite it because apparently I 'seemed to understand it, but need a little more time and guidance'. I know they're only giving me second chances because of Hopper's sob story." She doesn't know the details of what Hopper told the school administration to get them to admit a senior with no previous school attendance, but whatever it was, it's earned her a lot of pitying looks and soft voices and second chances. She hates them. She'd rather fail on her own terms.

"You *do* understand it," Nancy insists. "Remember, we've talked about this. Writing is a different skill from reading and understanding. I can help you."

"I know," Kali says. She does know. She just doesn't want to need anyone else. When she looks at Nancy, the look in her eyes says she knows exactly what Kali is thinking.

"We'll work on it today," Nancy says. "Promise. I'll come over after dinner and we can work on it. When is it due?"

"Friday."

"You have two days, then. Don't worry about it, okay?" Nancy squeezes Kali's hand. "You do so much for me. Let me help you too."

Kali is not used to being cared for. She's always been a protector, a teacher. She's never imagined needing help from someone as soft and kind as Nancy. But then, she's never imagined loving someone like Nancy, and look at them now.

"Yeah," she says, quieter. "Thank you."

"That's what girlfriends are for."

\*

When she hands in the paper on Friday, she has to wait until Monday for her results. When the paper lands on her desk first thing, the tension she's been carrying all weekend seeps out of her body in an instant.

*75%. Excellent corrections. Your opinions are always interesting and well-supported, and I'm glad to see you've been able to articulate them.*

Maybe school this year won't be so terrible after all.